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Recording and Representing Aesthetic Experiences in Diaries

The term 'aesthetic experience' has become a cipher of the unspeakable in a sensual and meaningful in-between over the past decades. While different times have positioned the subject area of aesthetics at different proximities of art, aesthetic sensations can, in principle, be triggered by any object – they are, in fact, not exclusive to art. If taking 'Erfahrung' (experience, sensation) literally, the 'motif of 'Fahrt' (travel, journey)' still exerts an attraction that reminds of the odysseys of one Ulysses, the ships of the Flying Dutchman, the rudderless death-barque of Kafka's 'The Hunter Gracchus' or Rimbaud's 'Bateau ivre', which all drift ad infinitum. Herein, the symbolism of a life's journey shines through alongside a desire to travel. (cf. Frank, 1979: 30)

In this article, which summarises some of the results of my research on 'The Manifestation of Aesthetic Experiences in Diaries', I attempt to show the impossibility to access experience directly and only is thus far communicable as a practice (Sabisch, 2007). By using students' recordings of their experiences I create a method of translating experience at the intersection of its art-pedagogical and qualitative-empirical representation, or, respectively, of art and pedagogy.

The documentary method of interpretation reconstructs the translation processes in recordings as experience and empiricism. Therein lies its exemplary as well as controversial nature.

Aesthetic Experience – a Consensus?

Although today's German art pedagogy is characterized by its many positions rather than 'by a systematic unified approach' almost every author in the field of art pedagogy is using *one* central term: 'aesthetic experience'. It not only appears in most of the German framework plans on various levels of education but also is still used in the current discourses on arts, cultural education and education theory.

* Translated into English by Sten Mellenthin

Georg Peez, teaching art pedagogy at the University of Duisburg-Essen, even suggests that ‘the connection to aesthetic experience’ represents a consensus in the discipline and ‘the central prerequisite of processes of aesthetic education’ as well (Peez, 2002: 19-21).

But what does this consensus comprise? What does the term ‘aesthetic experience’ mean?

Keeping these questions in mind, I began the research for my dissertation by looking for art-pedagogical facets and contexts of the term ‘aesthetic experience’ in order to sift the field of art pedagogy since the 1970’s. After encountering the usual difficulties of German art-didactical literature research – bad keywording of journal articles, barely any bibliographies, no database containing most of the art-pedagogical publications – many of the independent art-pedagogical texts came without a reference to a discourse or source. Additionally, it became clear that most of the texts had a completely different understanding of ‘aesthetic experience’ ranging from production as well as reception processes, sensual as well as reflective moments, conscious and subconscious, material and imaginery, productual and processual aspects. While reading the German literature, I often felt that the texts rather reflected the author’s preference and affective approach to art pedagogy than the specific processes of aesthetic experience.

I was unable to find a consensus in terms of a concise definition of the concept or the consistent reference to some definable modifying moments. But, the consistent use of the term for more than three decades, both in practicable teaching and learning contexts as well as theoretical reflection, could qualify as a consensus as such consistency is hardly to be observed at all in such heterogeneous fields.

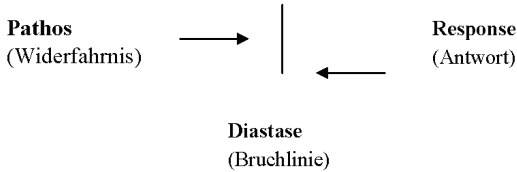
On another level of interest, the term ‘aesthetic experience’ serves as a placeholder or, more elegantly put, a cipher of an unspeakable. What this cipher stands for in the context of art pedagogy, what potential for integration it possesses for whom, what it sets free, conceals or which sacrifice it denotes could all be worthwhile questions for further research.

Regarding the matter at hand, however, I find it notable that the cipher ‘aesthetic experience’ refers to extremely diverse doorways to art pedagogy by its frequent but first and foremost affectively charged approach. This affective use of the term is neither a specific in the field of art pedagogy, nor is it historically self-evident. It has rather become apparent in the concepts of the term ‘experience’ which have stressed exactly this affective notion of experience itself since the turn of the 20th century. Before I will elaborate on this in the section ‘Relevance’, I shall reveal a possible understanding of ‘experience’ in the following excursus.

Experience

In favour of a more methodical approach to describe the term ‘experience’ in its complexity, I will resort to philosophy as a discipline of reference to art pedagogy. I will mostly be referring to the works of phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels, which exemplify a contemporary phenomenological position that defines ‘experience’ as fundamentally affective and corporal.

In ‘*Bruchlinien der Erfahrung*’ from 2002 (‘Break Lines of Experience’; from here on cited only by using bracketed page numbers) Waldenfels describes the paradoxical structure of experience, which I can only illustrate here very abridged. It is mainly comprised of two interrelated poles, which are separated by a break. He labels the one pole of experience ‘Pathos (Widerfahrnis)’, translated as ‘experience’ or ‘affect’, and the other ‘Response (Antwort)’, translated as ‘answer/ response’. As ‘break’ does not simply refer to a spatial gap, but literally means ‘to stand apart’ and hence includes a temporal dimension, Waldenfels chooses the more precise word ‘diastase’.



What does it mean? The rather banal example of a disturbance shall serve as an illustration: In the moment of being disturbed by a shrill sound, I have not yet identified it as a ring tone. For an instant, in the affect, I startle. But as soon as I interpret the sound as a ring tone, i.e. I assign meaning to it and place it within my frame of reference, I am already responding. Only hereafter can I switch the mobile phone off as a consequence of this interpretation. Between the instances of being startled and classifying, before we assign a meaning to something, a gap yawns to which we do not have access: a break.

Affect

These *disturbances*, which specifically exemplify the inaccessibility of the 'pathos' while touched by the unknown, can trigger certain experiences, prevent others or occur within the experience. How much they differ in intensity and thereby how strong the experience they trigger is, depends on how far beyond individual expectations or how far removed from the organisation of everyday life they are "in relation to our susceptibility to disturbances and our defence mechanisms" (p. 33). Examples that could be cited here range from simple everyday occurrences to pathological experiences such as traumatic injuries or shocks. Their common ground is the impossibility to describe the unknown and the known as opposites of psychological interior and physiological exterior instead of their interpenetration.

During the *Widerfahrnis* (affect) "something appears before it can be grasped, understood or rejected. The experience of a disturbance must not be confused, however, with the subsequent interpretation of an event as a disturbance and our respective defence mechanisms, which we use to regain our composure." (p. 33) Thus, affects happen (to us). They are instances in time that we can only interpret in retrospect. Affects themselves do therefore not have meaning yet. In themselves, they are without meaning (cf. Waldenfels, 2004: 133). When, in extreme cases, they paralyse us, it is not because of their meaning, i.e. their manifestation as something, but rather because they defy our sensual expectations by exceeding our order or sensual organisation. They can be "[so far beyond] our powers of comprehension as to shatter our world" (p. 33).

Break Lines of Experience

The transgression occurring at the break line of experience marks the limits of our abilities to comprehend and of any kind of interpretation. Significant in this respect is the fact that something happens within these breaks and that new differentiations are formed. Waldenfels uses the term 'diastase' to describe how this complex process of differentiation can be understood as a spatio-temporal shift: "'diastase' denotes a process of differentiation, in which that, what is being differentiated, only emerges" (p. 174). The concept is thus "closely related to Deleuze's and Derrida's use of the terms *différence* or *différance*. It does not merely describe an act of distinction in which one thing is set apart from another, but a process of separation, which is related to parting, seclusion and passing away" (p. 174). This process happens to us but is beyond our control.

In order to label and distinguish the different break lines of experience, Waldenfels calls a ‘significant difference’ a manifestation of something *as something*, a ‘representative difference’ something that stands *for something*, an ‘appetitive difference’ something that is *wanted in* another and ‘responsive difference’ if we *respond to* something (p. 175).

The spatio-temporal shift can be understood better by imagining that time and space also emerge during this process. Only then does the idea of diastase acquire “a radical temporal meaning if we imagine the occurrence of an affect in unity with the subsequentness of the effect that produces a response” (p. 178). This refers to a synchronicity inherent to break lines. But there is much more to it. “The shift does not only carry a temporal quality, it also gives time itself its very idiosyncratic imprint” (p. 179). It means that within this rift not only space and time are formed, but also the self and the other.

This ‘non-place’, which is created by the spatio-temporal shift and which “cannot be marked on any of the present temporal fields” (p. 180) also represents “the location of the imperfection, which eludes all creation of meaning and ambition and yet causes that there is something to say and do” (p. 60).

Imperfection

The philosophical discourse regards our non-accessible motivation to live and make experiences as something that derives from the kind of imperfection described above. Different times, however, had their own understanding of this imperfection as is being documented by several philosophical texts as well as impersonations of imperfection, for instance in Greek mythology and literature (cf. Eros).

According to Waldenfels, the imperfection derived “more and more from *absence*” (p. 50) since the early modern times. An initial absence thus triggers our desire (French: *désir*), i.e. a dynamic process of withdrawal that sparks our pursuits and aspirations (Latin: *appetitus*) again and again.

Embedding imperfection in an affect-rooted concept of experience has numerous forerunners. In the 20th century, the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud “put a new weight” (p. 302) on it. He understood this absence not only as the absence of the other but much more radically as absence or deprivation of oneself. In contrast to Freud, who, by reference of the terms ‘the unconscious’ and ‘repression’, saw imperfection as something past, the German philosopher Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) understands the anthropological meaning of the *unconscious* in the sense of a temporal pre-occurrence. In his renowned introduction to the Tübinger Philosophy – *‘I am. But I do not have me. Therefore, we will yet become.’* – he takes up this affective foundation of

experience. Therein, he describes imperfection as a *not-yet-having* based on such a deficiency of ‘having oneself’. The imperfection as a *not-yet-having* marks Bloch’s (and later in time Lacan’s) cognitive interest that aims at characterizing the unconscious as a *preconscious*, as *pre-occurrence*. Both approaches, however, debate the affective-based attentiveness, which cannot be simply uttered nor can it be perceived ‘immediately’ or as an entity like John Dewey (1859–1952) has done in ‘Art as Experience’ from 1934, a much cited work in the field of German art pedagogy.

Although the points of contact between the philosophical and psychoanalytical discourses are much more complex than can be illustrated here, both poles of not-yet and not-anymore (primal repression) have their relevance as epistemological cornerstones. On the one hand, they stand for different dimensions of imperfection as ‘not-knowing’, or absence respectively. On the other hand, they do not simply represent an imperfection, but also a “*border-knowledge*, i.e. an experience of deprivation or an absence within a presence” (p. 299).

For Waldenfels the fragility of experience is all about this affective border-knowledge. According to him, this border-knowledge emerges as a responsive difference between that what strikes us, and that what we respond to. Since I have already described Waldenfels’s idea of *pathos* above, by using the example of a disturbance, I will now elaborate on his concept of *response*, which he sees as a genuine part of experience.

Response

Each response creates a connection with something that has attracted, stirred, struck, moved, in short: affected us. The philosophical discourse often uses terms such as *meaning*, *desire*, *intention*, *attention* or *affection* with regard to these connections. They are beyond our control, but govern and guide us.

By following Waldenfels’ perception of response from the perspective of personal affect, its pathic hue, i.e. the influence of what initially attracted us, shines through. The directions our efforts take are determined by our attentiveness. In this process, the self becomes the norm of the reference as well as the deprivation.

How is this to be understood? The self should be perceived as initially split, only emerging through the interaction of reference and deprivation within the diastase. Self-deprivation motivates the self to a self-reference. This process of referring is driven by a ‘force’, namely the ‘attraction’ (Latin: *attentio*) that passes over into *interpretation*. Differently put: ‘Desiring, I am driven by something that is wanting, that deprives itself and in that affects as well as touches me’; by perceiving this ‘being touched’ *as some-*

thing, I have already interpreted it (Waldenfels, 2004: 221 and 136). The interpretation, in turn, is part of the response. Thus, any perception and experience begins with a something that attracts us or which we respond to.

In the diagram above (fig. 1), the arrows mark the spatio-temporal shift. This serves to illustrate that our responses to affects cannot be seen as mere reflections of the events, but rather that experience in itself is fragmented and subjected to shifts.

This rift within an experience shifts time and space, the self and the other, as those, while responding, reappear elsewhere as the other in a new co-relation. It is through this shift that they experience themselves in time, which a posteriori appears as a before and after, suggesting that there existed such a thing as an immediate, total presence in the experience. Thus, the shift implies an initial subsequent quality of responding: “Only in responding to whatever affects us the affect itself comes to light.” (p. 59).

What makes Waldenfels’s model of experience unique is the fact that it stresses the genuine fragility of experience and that it shows the shift that emerges through the response. While hermeneutics has mostly interpreted experience as the experience expressed through language, Waldenfels’ idea of response leaves the question of how experience is articulated unanswered.

His model thus expands the 20th century’s idea of an antagonism between a hermeneutic, linguistic-reflexive approach and a phenomenological one based on the analogy of the gaze. In contrast to Derrida’s idea of writing as the prototype of response, Waldenfels renders the linguistic response as *one* mode of response – how experience is articulated or visualized – equally possible as he does for situational-physical or visual responses.

Relevance

For the educational practice, I see the relevance of this affective-based, physical concept of experience in its scope to describe experience as the transformation of a suffering and indulging self into a responding self. Experience is invisible. We can neither observe it nor access it directly. It eludes our consciousness. We therefore need an intellectual handrail to enable us to communicate about affective, emotional, pre-linguistic and pre-conscious phenomena, which form the basis for any attentiveness and learning.

This is not without consequences for educational practice, as it means that experience can no longer be perceived as a promising or original entity. On the contrary, the paradoxical structure of physical experience dissolves old dialectical divisions of body and mind, theory and practice, nature and technology. By strengthening the in-between of attentiveness, this construction allows for the self to be seen not just as an *active* being that is at our disposal

whenever we want it to be. Instead, the self-related sensual affect of the self is taken seriously. This kind of teaching method starts out from what attracts our attention, what motivates us and what we respond to (cf. Woo, 2007).

Yet, we know shockingly little about aesthetic interests and specific desires of expression (cf. Goetz, 2004: 372; Seydel, 2005: 168).

Bearing this in mind, an 'education' (*Erziehung*) seems obsolete which implies that we, the teachers, always know what and how learners still have to experience. It will rather give way to a '*Bildung*' (formation) of the self, which is inseparably tied to the experience of unfamiliarity (otherness). (In that, we will never be unemployed). The unfamiliar (non-own) precedes the familiar (own) by exceeding our regulatory framework and affecting us. It breaks the 'circle of being oneself'.

If we understand such a process of self-formation (*Selbstbildung*) as something that occurs through media, we arrive at an intersection with the field of art pedagogy. And more: The transformation of what affects us into something we respond to creates – so my thesis – exactly that in-between where aesthetic self-formation can genuinely begin. This in-between always is already governed by individual attentiveness and provokes the ever new venture to respond.

This is a radical proposition in so far as aesthetic experience would not just represent one mode of experience among others but rather form the basis for or motivate all kinds of experience. Since we have no control over the affect it always raises questions about the limits of teaching.

Furthermore, the physical, affective figuration of the fragmented experience becomes relevant in that it makes possible 'applications' plausible for both art pedagogy and qualitative empirical research. This shall be discussed in the following chapter.

Application of Experience

Since we have no direct access to (aesthetic) experience, I will translate the question of *what* experience *is* to *how* it can be represented in order to become communicable. The question of how to communicate about experience in art classes is essential for a pedagogy (educational science) that takes an interest in the learners' own aspirations and their questions.

In contrast to the one-sided, exclusively theoretical approach which defines 'characteristics' to form a rigid matrix for educational or empirical reconstructions and evaluations, I will use the term 'aesthetic experience' – just as the collaborative research centre of the same name in Berlin – as a dynamic placeholder in order to be able to also examine the 'applications' of experience (cf. Mattenklott, 2004: 18).

One possible way of applying and thus updating experience lies, I think, in the (albeit impossible) attempt to record it. By recording experiences, we transfer them into a medium and thereby make the differences and break lines accessible through the medium.

However, processual recordings of experience only make sense if we understand them as a practice of responding to affects. Without the object of experience, writing or recording processes in a teaching environment become as useless as an experience, which cannot be communicated without depiction. Therefore, I will use the term ‘application’ to describe a practice of responding as the *translation* of experience. (cf. Pazzini, 2000)

This kind of practice of responding will then be aesthetically turned if we transform what affects us – with regard to its mediality, materiality and temporality – into what we respond to. (cf. Oudée Dünkelsbühler, 2000: 55; Pazzini, 2000) Therefore, an aesthetic application of experience must be seen as ‘a matter of representation, imagination, substitution, mediatisation and (re-)presentation” including all their limitations. (Meyer, 2003: 13) It is the aspiration of teaching arts to make this aesthetic dimension accessible to experience and to communication.

Art-Pedagogical Application

I will use the term ‘recording’ in order to sketch a method of textual and visual representation in art pedagogy, which can be perceived as a practice of responding.

This practice is especially important in the context of research- and practice-based learning, as this method focuses on the formation (Bildung) of the self. As a form of self-oriented, self-organized learning, research-based learning assumes an existing interest of the learner that manifests itself in the questions they have and in their methods used. It is therefore quite remarkable that the interrelation between research-based learning and the use of the term ‘aesthetic experience’ has not yet been examined; despite the fact that both discourses have been debated for the past 35 years in Germany.

In the following, I shall attempt to further outline my definition of recording and its use in other contexts. I will then try to answer questions as to what extent experience and recording processes are interwoven and how they can become communicable.

Recording

The term ‘recording’, which I use synonymously with the meaning of the suffix ‘-graphy’ (from Greek *gráphein*: to write, etch, draw) is used here to denote practices of notation and documentation, which accompany learning. These practices include both content (as in *biography* or *cosmography*) and a method of representation through media (as in *photography*, *videography*, *audiography* etc.).

Several terms are used for such recording practices in the context of art pedagogy. Alongside such names denoting the intended [fixed] product, such as ‘aesthetic’ or ‘visual diary’, ‘journal’ or ‘portfolio’, terms like ‘mapping’ or ‘charting’ stress specific recording practices. In contrast to purely text-based diaries, recordings can utilize not only linguistic means (written speech) but also combine diverse representational modes of media.

To record something is not a new practice. Most writers, academics and artists use different forms of notation to be able to capture their brief experiences in form of sketches, graphs, notes etc. preferably in a timely and mobile manner (cf. Engler, 1992; Dewey, 1934).

Since the mid-18th century, those notations have increasingly become biased by their authors’ subjectivity and autobiography. Provided that the notations survive, they can be recognized as the textual or visual construction and representation of the author’s ideas, arguments or imaginations. They become references.

In the 20th century, both, writers and researchers in the field of literature studies, have referred to this phenomenon as ‘recordings’ or ‘notes’. The ‘literature of recording’ was thereby characterized as a literary abridgement, which occurred in form of a collection of autobiographic notes written in a rather colloquial, ephemeral register and style. It is to be noted that this style of writing occurred increasingly in certain periods of the 20th century (i.e. the 1930s, 1960s and 1990s). (cf. Lappe, 1991: 32; cf. Niemuth-Engelmann, 1998; Dittberner, 1996, 1998)

In conceiving these texts not as accidental traces but rather as written responses to affects, we retrospectively arrive at an approximation of an experience that possibly occurred and thus transcend the visible manifestations. In my doctoral thesis, I interpreted the recurring productive practice of writing as a response to a crisis of representation within the medium of written speech and thereby also of the literary repertoire. Although this hypothesis is rather presumptive, it shall nevertheless hint at how experience can manifest itself in a medium, here: in written speech as the application.

Recording and Experience

The fact that recordings in the form of personal testimonials also have their relevance in the educational context is shown not only by the current discussions on issues like *portfolio learning* and web logs. However, the way in which the interrelationship between recording and experience in the recording process actually works and how this may be productively used for art classes has not yet been examined so far and shall therefore be outlined in the following paragraphs.

The transformation of a suffering self into an extrovert and thereby outlined, responding self happens within the recording process. Therefore, recording can be seen as a tool of response, which does not merely document an experience but brings it into existence. Experience is formed through the process of recording, and therefore the recording process, as a media-determined kind of response, plays a genuine role in our creation of meaning. While we record, we are faced with many decisions with regard to the process of translation into the format used for recording.

By asking ourselves, for instance, how we can describe or visualize a certain experience, we witness the pre-occurrence of the 'not-yet'. It is exactly this pre-occurrence that constitutes the aesthetic productivity of recordings. Only during the provisional process of recording do performative dynamics appear: In the process of graphing the order of experience becomes the experience of ordering. The articulation of experience becomes the experience of articulating. The representation of experience becomes the experience of representing. In this way, the recording process creates the fissure along which experience breaks. The recording process makes the fragility of experience visible through its pauses, gaps and traces, while at the same time is itself created.

By inscribing themselves *into* the medium in the form of pauses, gaps or ruptures, the break lines do not only structure the finished product, but also its process of creation (and thus also experience) at the moment of graphing. We can thus use the manifestations to trace the way in which the break lines of experience shine through in the recording or how the recording process itself produces the intermediate sphere of fragmented experience.

The relevance of this interrelationship for art pedagogy lies in the fact that the recording process as a publication strategy geared towards the individual represents a self-determined use of media, which cannot only lead to *Bildung* (education) and thus generate experience, it can also make the organisation of experience visible as the dynamic orientation of *Bildung*.

In order to examine and reflect upon such visualisations of experience, and to substantiate particular art-pedagogical questions, we require a connection to the empirical implementation.

Experience = Empiricism

Experience in its translation means ‘empiricism’. In its colloquial use, however, ‘empiricism’ mainly refers to academically applied (observed and manageable) experience in the form of data. I would now like to propose that by combining Waldenfels’ understanding of the term experience with the principles of recording we would find connections to a qualitative empirical social research.

In the 1920s, the Viennese developmental psychologist Charlotte Bühler laid the foundations for an empirical debate on recording processes, more precisely teenagers’ diaries; coincident with the period of time that Lappe identified as the beginning of the genre ‘literary recording’.

While the diaries she analysed were only in retrospect declared references and studied under developmental psychological perspectives, by using recordings I developed an art-pedagogical method that, at the same time, also provides a method of data collection. I thereby have gained the advantage of not doing one-sided research *about* aesthetic experience, but rather study it by looking at an art-pedagogical application. In order to get a clearer picture I will shortly draft the setting.

Setting

During a seminar on ‘Aesthetic Research’ at the art-pedagogical department of the University of Dortmund in 2003, I set my students the following objective: *‘Find a topic or question of your choice – not related to art – which you want to examine over the course of this semester, and choose an appropriate means of recording’*

In reference to the data collection method ‘photo elicitation’ drafted by Douglas Harper (Harper, 2003: 414), I called this stimulus ‘elicitation of graphing’ to point out the stimulative nature of the process and its underlying structures of government. The collected data consists of 55 different audio-visual and written recordings, which were produced over the course of six months. My research question on which basis I examined the recordings with respect to their relation to experience read: “How do recordings *reflect* (invisible) aesthetic experiences?” Why is qualitative research suited for this kind of study?

Qualitative Empirical Research

Qualitative empirical social research concentrates on the experiences of others between the poles of academic research and society where, on the one hand, social aspects become the objects of academic research and, on the other hand, the knowledge of social science carries the potential of changing society and thereby contains a political or ethic dimension, respectively. Within this area of conflict, collective as well as individual experiences are discussed.

In contrast to quantitative research, methods of qualitative research consider ‘the perspectives of the individuals involved, the subjective and social structures of their world’, with ‘the openness to the world of experience, their inner state and their principles of structure’ being the ‘central starting point for the development of an object-based theory’. (Flick, 2003: 17)

The attempt to reconstruct the other’s subjective creation of sense and meaning made qualitative research not only become attractive to the field of educational studies and explains its rapid circulation, it also serves to sensitise, “discover and describe alien worlds”. (Oswald, 2003: 79) According to Uwe Flick, qualitative research should, therefore, “always be recommended, where a yet scarcely studied realm of reality is to be explored”. (Flick, 2003: 25)

This is the case if you look at (aesthetic) experiences of academic students as well as if dealing with the question of the relevance of studying graphing/recording in the context of empirical research. Following Seydel’s research of interrelations between aesthetic experience and biography, I will analyse (aesthetic) experience in view of specific graphing.

In doing so, I regard the recording by the students to be a process of performative production in which I look at the scopes of experience the students choose or explore as well as the kind of orientations that inscribe themselves within these scopes. Other questions for further research may derive as an outcome.

Prior to sketching the research steps required for rebuilding recording process, I will outline the basic assumptions underlying this reconstructive methodology.

Basic Assumptions of a Reconstructive Methodology

Reconstructing a subjective process of ‘making sense’ as ‘self-sense’/‘self-meaning’ and studying the structures and processes that are inaccessible to observation requires a methodology ‘which is not normatively prescribed’,

but “developed, based on the reconstruction and analysis of the processes of (re)cognition in everyday life”. (Bohnsack, 2003: 25) Taking this praxeological methodology, which Ralf Bohnsack developed for the documentary method of interpretation, as a starting point, I have designed a data collection method – ‘elicitation of graphing’ – which makes others practise a media-based responding to own questions, processes of research or *Bildung*.

The praxeological methodology is grounded on the basic assumption of an existing implicit knowledge. Or, put differently: The knowledge-sociological premise of implicit knowledge only even allows for a reconstruction of experience.

Implicit Knowledge

Implicit knowledge is closely linked to experience; at least with the corporal part of experience, which is tied to the practices of performance/doing. Like in art, where thought correlates with the motor skills of the hand without being able to explicate it, for instance while painting a picture or playing the piano etc., implicit knowledge only just spawns what is being practised.

Thus, it does not only produce a subconscious structure that can be ascribed to certain rules or regulations. The implicit knowledge, beyond the practical level, rather appears as an implicit knowledge formation or structure; it is *productive* itself. In the performative realization of an experience, knowledge eludes itself through implicit knowledge, it is inaccessible, it is an imperfection, a ‘not-knowing’ and just thereby it organises experience, inscribes itself, as it were, into experience as a *trace* – as I have conveyed with Waldenfels. The implicit knowledge becomes a trace, which “testifies without testifying. It is, if you like, testament to the disappearance of the witness. It is testament to the disappearance of experience.” (Derrida, 1998: 221)

As early as 1959, Polanyi outlined how this ‘implicit knowledge’ is not simply a part of everyday activities, but also a fundamental element of all cognitive processes and thereby of great relevance to the practice of academic research. (Polanyi, 1959: 73) I would like to add the thesis that habitual knowledge will also be constitutive, i.e. governing aspect for any aesthetic practice.

By choosing a ‘genetic approach to analysing’ and by ‘[aiming] at the question of how social reality is being created interactively and experience-like’, reconstructive social science presumes that implicit knowledge contributes to the creation of reality by organising it and by “manifesting itself in this process of creation”. (Bohnsack, 2003: 194) The implicit knowledge becomes – and this is where a reconstruction of experience should ensue – the precondition of comprehension in so far as it functions like a *Movens*

(purpose): it motivates and organises an ongoing action, activity or practice. It provides the basis for the momentum within the experience of performing and so for the experience of graphing as well. In addition, ‘implicit knowledge’ and experience can be perceived as a pre-structuring or grounding of future experiences of performing because – as already mentioned above – it serves “as an implicit knowledge formation or structure beyond the practical level”. (Bohnsack, 2003: 23)

Postulate of Unfamiliarity

In addition to the action-governing function of implicit knowledge, another basic methodological assumption refers to the communication between researchers and their research subjects/objects. In his ‘crisis experiments’ the founder of ethnomethodology, Harold Garfinkel, showed together with his students by means of communicational dysfunctions that utterances made while communicating are not automatically tied to a certain meaning. Rather, “linguistic expressions are indexical, i.e. they are merely signs of meaning” that are subject to interpretation. (Bohnsack, 2003: 19)

In everyday life, this is barely recognised as an interpretation effort, because one always already circulates in a culture or subculture, a social background or generation, i.e. a shared ‘conjunctive world of experience’ (as Mannheim called it) and the actors “tacitly imply the intelligibility of what they signify one another.” (Strübing, 2004: 389)

But if this daily practice were transferred to the field of academic research, this implication would first of all connote *that* a shared ‘conjunctive world of experience’ existed and secondly that within this ‘conjunctive world of experience’ researchers have always already ‘understood’ what the others would signify; otherwise they would be unable to represent the other at all.

Any research, just like any attempt to *understand* the unfamiliar, would be superfluous because the unfamiliar, and thus also experience itself, would just no longer emerge. The process of understanding would simply mean to *rediscover* the Me in the You. Not proceeding on the assumption that researchers and research subjects/objects share the same world of experience under the postulate of unfamiliarity, the question of how to transcend from the conjunctive world of experience into the communicative becomes pertinent.

Recording – The Transition into the ‘Communicative World of Experience«

The mode of transition from the conjunctive into the communicative world of experience is generally – for the actors mutely – regulated by the data collection method and reconstructed by the analysis method. The researchers often structure in advance the media-related freedom of the respondent by the ‘power of question’, thus rarely getting an image/picture for an answer to an interview question. (cf. Derrida, 2003: 15; Bodenheimer, 2004)

In order to leave those who are subject to research the structuring of the communication with regard to the study of the relevant topics, I have designed the data collection method in such a way as to let them also choose the medium to be used to communicate. I hereby relate to the studies of the educational researcher Horst Niesyto who analysed the ‘indigenous production of media’ in view of childhood and adolescence research. (Niesyto, 2001) The media-based ‘transition’ on the part of the research subjects generates an additional counter-horizon to the researcher.

In light of my art-pedagogical focal point, I have, in reference to Waldenfels, established that the transmutation of what affects us into what we respond to constitutes exactly the in-between where an aesthetic self-Bildung (self-formation) genuinely commences. By giving over this in-between space to the others I installed an additional methodical monitoring and I developed another means of reflection with regard to the experience and the mode of articulation respectively.

Furthermore, the postulate of unfamiliarity not only is an assumption that carries relevance for the following interpretation of graphings. The unfamiliarity is, in fact, not just single-sidedly postulated, but methodically controllable in so far as the students themselves decide whether or not to proceed on the assumption of a shared conjunctive world of experience in their recording and whether or not to view their recorded experiences as principally possible to share or to communicatively interpret.

The Problem of the Base Sentence

The potential significance of this methodological modification for the reflection of experience foreshadows in bringing to mind that the problem of the base sentence or respectively the question of how an observation or experience can be transformed into a [] of observation is left to the others to answer.

Especially with regard to the students' aesthetic experiences that are to be reflected, the media-related dimension of 'transition' is of enormous importance, due to being the one that is practised in the graphing process and thereby manifested.

More than any other means of 'recording', in which observations are translated into sentences of written records, graphings serve as a methodical control mechanism that certainly "sharpens and specifies the distinction of 'data' (original texts) and interpretations by the researcher" (Bohnsack, 2003: 196). But the fact that here the research subjects, the others, are graphing entails a methodological and art-pedagogical combination of accessing the experience of unfamiliarity, particularly if recording is perceived as the instrument to respond to an affect.

Graphings clearly illustrate that the base [...] problem is inseparably linked to another dimension, namely the connection between a theory and its object in question or observation: Depending on *how* the relation between theory and experience forms itself within a recording, another mode of articulating experience emerges, necessitating another methodical control mechanism.

As a result, the practice of recording becomes immensely important in a methodological context because the formation of experience and theory depends on *how* something is recorded, noted or documented. Different ways of recording establish different references to 'the' reality. They only create the object, which is non-existent without them but comes to existence through them.

Methodological Translation Steps in Research

Once we have envisioned these basic assumptions of a reconstructive methodology, we can start reconstructing the practice of recording. Due to the fact that the limited scope of this article does not allow for a demonstration of interpreting individual aesthetic experiences, I will limit myself to the question of how they can be reflected by briefly summarizing the methodological translation steps I used in my research.

As described above, I developed the 'elicitation of graphing' as a data collection method in order to draw up data that transcends the general range of interpreted individual texts and images as it requires to formulate a question of your own and offers possibilities of mixed forms of graphing. Using the documentary method I selected one case from my extensive collection of data that allowed me to demonstrate that a change in structures of orientation is associated with changes in the recording practice, and that this change emerges along the temporal, physical and media-related break lines, which also mark the limits of analysis.

By describing the break lines – along with the focus-related metaphors – as additional indicators of media-related and physical dimensions of experience as well as indicators of regulatory frameworks, I was able to add a comparative analytical step to the documentary method. I identified various media-related and physical dimensions of experience with regard to breaks by comparing the external and internal interpretation of individual cases. It became obvious that the breaks only become visible against the backdrop of a unifying process of comprehension, and thus perform two indicating functions. They do not only refer to dimensions of experience, but also to the action-governing arranging patterns of the comprehension process by disrupting them. In the reconstructed moment of disruption, the implicit knowledge is documented along the break lines because they position experiences. They thus serve as indicators of reflection and point to the temporal, media-related and physical dimensions of experience.

For this reason, graphings take on a huge significance in qualitative research that I have combined with an additional interpretative step to the documentary method: the variation of graphing. Furthermore, I suggested that a case-internal and -external comparisons of graphings and their breaks, can elucidate the arranging patterns of searching against the backdrop of orientational patterns regarding certain age groups, social backgrounds or institutions.

Recordings form the basis of all these methodological stages of translation that serve to enable reflections on aesthetic experience. Recordings thus become a filter for the reflection of experience.

Recordings as a Measure of Aesthetic Experience?

The way in which recordings become interfaces for analysing (aesthetic) experiences can be demonstrated by looking at their various functions: As a means of response, which documents experience in all its fragility by initially evoking it, a recording serves as an instrument which motivates and generates experience, denoting the first function of recordings.

While recording, searching and researching processes are being initiated, questions arise, new scopes of imagination and experience as well as new possibilities to respond emerge, linked automatically to affect-based pre-experiences and attentivenesses, which in turn provide the matrix for new individual opportunities of experience. Due to the structural recurrence of this process during research, graphing also becomes a means of governing, organization and orientation in the experience-making process, which denotes the second function. Similar to a compass that provides geographical orientation, graphing can be a navigational instrument to aid a search as well as enable a discursive, spatial or temporal localisation.

These first two functions cannot be observed. They take effect during the *production* process of recordings by organizing experiences, and become visible and (re-)constructible only through the following function.

For the third function I take up the above described gesture of adherence, which uses recordings as a means of storage or archiving of experience-making processes. The transformation of the fleeting experience into ever yet subsequent recorded manifestations is the precondition of their communicability and the intersubjective traceability within the context of academic research. The documenting function of storage itself implies experiences that are just thereby initiated.

In the process of visualising, articulating or formulating of already existent or yet to be discovered experiences additional possibilities to experience arise from the production of data.

The data collection and data production method ‘elicitation of graphing’ was designed to be able to freely choose place and time as well as medium, topic and method of responding. This serves to avoid a one-sided representation of the others. Instead, this way of producing data helps others to ‘form their voice’. It follows the demand that the others respond in recording their experiences.

The recordings in form of data produced by yourself or someone else then turn into references that are yet to be interpreted during the research process, which constitutes the fourth function: recordings become means of interpretation of one’s own and unfamiliar experiences during the recording process as well as afterwards. In this double function of reference and instrument, recordings also appeal to applications in the field of qualitative empirical research because how someone orients himself during the experience process by means of recordings depends on how experiences are interpreted.

In summary, recordings as means of responding refer to different media-related, physical and temporal experiences, methods and worlds of experiences and allow the unfamiliar. They serve as a media-based and methodological connector in order to analyse aesthetic experiences. By interfering with experiences, they not only locate but assess them. To perceive the assessment as an activity that cannot be isolated from its representation means to perceive recordings as a standard for representational, i.e. aesthetic experiences.

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